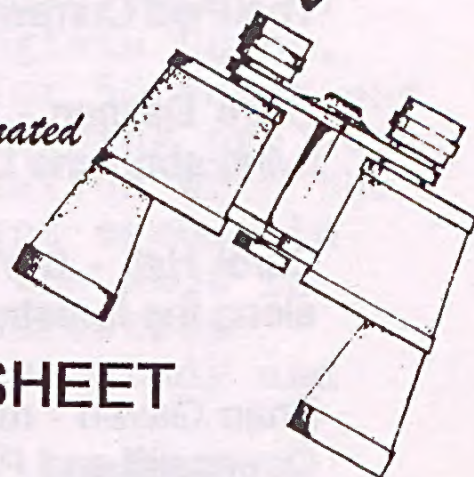


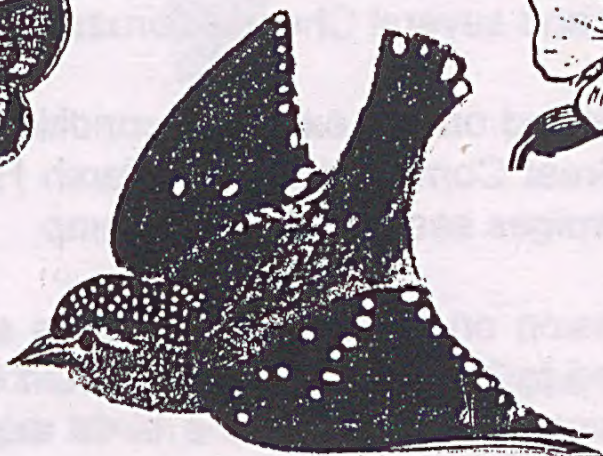
Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Incorporated

MARCH 1997

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET



- Meeting :** Mar 14 AGM and Members' Night
Meeting : Apr 4 Ms Margaret O'Toole : Marine Biology
Excursion : Mar 16 Newlyn Reservoir : Mr G Binns
(half-day excursion)
Excursion : Apr 6 Barwon Heads Rock Platforms :
Mr John Gregurke



President: Mr G Binns
Secretary: Mr L Fink
Treasurer: Ms S Davison
Editor: Mr A Dyson

Postal Address:
PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350.

Meetings are held at the Art Building,
School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard
St South, commencing at 7.30 pm.

Excursions commence from the corner
of Sturt and Armstrong Sts., Ballarat, at
9.30 am for full-day excursions or at 1.30
pm for half-day excursions.

FIELD REPORTS

Frank Harrap - a pair of Peregrine Falcons flying over Mount Helen and on another day, a flock of about 150 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. Frank also mentioned the prevalence of the larger birds and fewer sightings of smaller birds on visits to the Wombat Forest. The Pied Currawong is the most common call heard.

Clare Dalman - about a dozen Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos seen flying about the Lismore area.

Carol Hall - 6 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos feeding in pine trees along the foreshore at Lorne.

Brian Gavan - many gannets seen while on board the ferry between Queensliff and Portsea.

Alan Morrison - a dead Peregrine Falcon on the road near Ararat. It had been banded as a chick in November 1995. A Peregrine was also seen patrolling over the ferry on Lake Wendouree. Also at the lake - the white starling reported by others in Ballarat which Alan estimated is being at least 50% totally white with pinkish legs. Two Square-tailed Kites had fledged at Mount Cole over a period of 7 to 10 days. At Cundare Pond many Straw-necked Ibis, over 1000 Mountain Ducks, and several Chestnut-breasted Shelduck were seen.

Greg Binns - reported on the excellent condition of the Merrin Merrin Swamp. Many Great Cormorants, also Marsh Harriers and Whistling Kites. A pair of Brolgas seen at Middle Swamp.

A general discussion on the habits of grebes at Lake Wendouree - many still seemed to be nesting. Eggs should hatch within 30 days and an opinion ventured was that the birds were possibly sitting on infertile eggs.

ERRATUM; February Newsletter page 6. Excursion notes on trip to Slaty Creek. Among the butterflies noted - Common Brown (not Crimson Brown). Mistake made by a colourblind transcriber.

LIFE MEMBER

Congratulations to our president Greg Binns on being awarded an honorary Life Membership of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union. Greg has been an active member for 50 years and has taken part in many data collecting projects. He has had an even longer association with the RAOU as his father was a prominent member in Greg's youth. Founded in 1901, the RAOU is Australia's oldest national conservation organisation and is devoted to the study and protection of native birdlife.



DIARY DATES

Sunday 16 March - excursion to Newlyn Reservoir. Meet at Book City Corner at 1.30 pm for an afternoon excursion and BYO picnic tea.

Tuesday 25 March - Committee meeting at (John Gregurke) at 7.30 pm.

Sunday 6 April - excursion will be to the Barwon Heads coastline and hinterland. Bring appropriate gear for exploring the inter-tidal zone, ie. rockwalking around pools etc.

EXCURSION TO POINT COOK COASTAL PARK February 9 1997

Over twenty members travelled to Point Cook Coastal Park where we were met by the Ranger Bernie McCarrick. With the help of a large aerial photograph the salient features of the park were explained, especially the plans for the future of the now defunct saltworks. In addition to residential and recreational developments, 80 ponds are to be retained as wetland with salinity levels monitored to provide suitable habitat for the migratory populations of waders and native water birds. Access will be improved with boardwalks and interpretive signage.

After lunch we walked along the shore towards the old homestead, formerly home to the Chirnside family. There was disappointingly little birdlife, perhaps because the tide was high. Silver gulls abounded, while Little Pied, Little Black and Great Cormorants perched on fence posts and jetties. A small group of Crested Terns wheeled overhead. Along the shoreline an abundance of shells, the remains of crabs and jellyfish and sea urchins created interest. Unfortunately there were considerable amounts of litter, much of it plastic, along the tideline. A Singing Honeyeater was seen atop an aloe, and a White-fronted Chat swooped low among the bushes at the edge of the beach.

As Spectacle Lake was dry, we investigated RAAF Lake but water levels were low. Again Cormorants were prominent on fence posts, and three Pacific Gulls with one juvenile were seen in the centre.

Members enjoyed the acrobatics of aircraft from the nearby RAAF station, training and perhaps practising for the forthcoming air show at Avalon

Carol Hall

PS Within the list of 14 land birds observed at the park 3 raptor species were of interest, viz. Brown Goshawk. Marsh Harrier and Australian Hobby.

GB

LAKE WENDOUREE PROJECT - FNCB Meeting 7 February 1997

At the end of 1992 the FNCB was given a grant of \$250 from the Ballarat City Council (BCC) Lake Wendouree Advisory Committee. The aim was to compile a series of photographic slides on the flora and fauna of Lake Wendouree. A sub-committee was formed - members being Greg Binns, John Gregurke, Pat and Bill Murphy and Stephanie Davison with the latter two being principal photographers and the others contributing their expertise on history, birds and plant life. About 600 slides were taken with 240 of these being selected to make up the set. Fletcher *Photographics* donated several rolls of film and supplied many more at a discount and the BCC gave \$400 for duplicating. The Advisory Committee is investigating possible uses of the kit including scanning and possible availability on the Internet.

Stephanie and John presented the complete set at our meeting (previously we had seen some slides and heard parts of the script). Topics covered include a general history of the lake, the trees, the lake edge, life in the lagoons, the areas of Convent Corner and Fairyland, the open water, seasonal changes, management of the lake and recreational uses of the lake.

We were all most impressed with the excellent slides and the amount of information provided in the slide/script presentation. Congratulations to Stephanie, John Pat, Bill and Greg and we hope a much wider audience is soon aware of *Lake Wendouree - a Living Lake*.

VD



NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

Federation Internationale de l'art Photographed
The International Federation of Photographic art

(From the 1985 Congress)

DEFINITION OF NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

The Nature Photography Commission defines nature photography as depicting "untamed animals and uncultivated plants in their natural habitat, geology and phenomena not produced by man. The accurate record of the subjects and natural environment is the prime factor..."

The intention of the FIAP nature definition is to encourage photography of flora, fauna and geology in a natural situation, not cultivated or attended by humans. For this reason any photograph showing evidence of humans or their environment is less than perfect. The intent is to encourage photographers to respect our flora, fauna and geological formations and use their photographic skill in elimination, or at least minimizing any evidence of humans. In many cases this can be achieved by selective focus, position of camera and so on. The intention is to encourage photographers to record the natural world with feeling, sensitivity and truth. There is an urgency to record vanishing subjects so we must encourage this, but we do accept pictures which have evidence of humans because we appreciate that this is unavoidable in many cases. Our aim is to illustrate nature subjects and leave the illustration of humans and their special environment to others."



CODE OF ETHICS FOR NATURE PHOTOGRAPHERS

Many groups have published codes of behaviour and one of particular merit is the *"Nature Photographers' Code of Practice"* published by the Association of *British Natural History Photographic Societies*. The following three points are critical.

1. The welfare of the subject is more important than the photograph - this applies to geological as well as biological subjects and is particularly important in the case of a rare and endangered species.
2. Local or national conservation requirements must always be observed, including the obtaining of entry permits wherever required and confinement to approved routes or tracks.
3. The immediate environment must be undisturbed for species survival. Photographers should become acquainted with the requirements of sensitive life forms before photographing them. Consequently "gardening", hide construction and other intrusive activities must be kept to a minimum.

The article concludes: "... we suffer far too much disturbance to our natural heritage in the course of human advancement. Let the photographer record for posterity without adding to our losses".

(Thanks to Greg Binns for the basis of this article)



Water Rat *Hydromys chrysogaster*.

Order Rodentia Sub Order Myomorpha Family
Muridae

Unrelated to the Water Vole, which is also called a Water Rat, this species is restricted to Australia and New Guinea and adjacent Islands. Among it's adaptions for aquatic life, are broad partially webbed hind feet, and waterproof fur.

This dense fur, soft and lustrous led to, in the past, commercial exploitation as fur bearers.

Water Rats usually live in the vicinity of permanent bodies of water fresh or brackish, nests are made at the end of long tunnels, in banks and occasionally in logs. It is slightly clumsy on

land but can climb hollow trees in search of prey, but takes most of it's food from the water, prey

is often carried to a regularly feeding sight. It is unique among Australian Rodents in not being entirely nocturnal. Most activity takes place around sunset but some may forage in full daylight, there is much fighting among males resulting in some damage to tails.

Breeding occurs throughout the year but most litters are born between spring and late summer.

Females may become sexually active from 4 months of age, gestation occupies about 34 days and up to 5 litters(usually 1 to 2) are produced annually, 3 or 4 young being born, the female has 4 nipples the stay with the mother for about 4 weeks gradually becoming independent, the water proof fur is moulted twice a year. Cats, foxes, goannas birds of prey and snakes are their main enemy, it is, however, regarded by anglers and irrigation as a pest.

Flood mitigation practices have removed much of it's habitat.

Their status is sparse to common, there are no subspecies, they are found around lake Wendouree and most water ways in Ballarat.

Elfin.